

## **In the Claims**

Claims are amended as follows:

1. (currently amended) A method of routing a contact in a network comprising a plurality of contact centers, said method comprising the steps of:-

- a) receiving a contact at any one of the contact centers, said any one of the contact centers being designated a source contact center with respect to the received contact;
- b) sending a reservation request from the source contact center to each of the contact centers including itself at the same time, said reservation request being for an agent with a specified relative intrinsic value;
- c) for said reservation request, receiving at the source contact center from each of one or more of the contact centers, a value of the specified intrinsic and an associated agent identifier;
- d) routing the received contact to one of the agents on the basis of the received intrinsic.

2. (original) A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein said specified intrinsic is selected from nodal longest idle agent, average answer delay and calls queued count.

3. (currently amended) A method of routing a contact in a network comprising a plurality of contact centers, said method comprising the steps of:-

- (i) receiving a contact at any one of the contact centers, said any one of the contact centers being designated a source contact center with respect to the received contact;
- (ii) sending a reservation request from the source contact center to each of the contact centers including itself at the same time, said reservation request being for a nodal longest idle agent;

- (iii) for said reservation request, receiving at the source contact center from each of one or more of the contact centers, a nodal longest idle time and associated agent identifier;
  - (iv) routing the received contact to the agent with the longest of all the received nodal longest idle times.
- 4. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 3 which further comprises the step of (v) cancelling unused reservations.
- 5. (cancelled)
- 6. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 3 wherein said step (iii) of receiving at the source contact center is carried out in a pre-specified time interval.
- 7. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 1 or 3 wherein said contact is associated with a specified network skillset and wherein said reservation request is also for agents of that specified skillset.
- 8. (previously presented) A method as claimed in claim 3 which further comprises determining at the source contact center a network longest idle agent.
- 9. (cancelled)
- 10. (currently amended) A contact center suitable for use in a network of contact centers, said contact center comprising:
  - (i) an input arranged to receive a contact;
  - (ii) an output arranged to send a reservation request to each of the contact centers in the network of contact centres including itself at the same time, said reservation request being for an agent with a specified relative intrinsic value;
  - (iii) a second input arranged to receive, for said reservation request, a value of the specified intrinsic and an associated agent identifier from each of one or more of the contact centers;

- (iv) a processor arranged to route the contact to one of the agents on the basis of the received intrinsic;

wherein said contact center is capable of receiving a reservation request in respect of a different contact from any contact center in said network of contact centers.

11. (currently amended) A contact center suitable for use in a network of contact centers, said contact center comprising:

- (i) an input arranged to receive a contact;
- (ii) an output arranged to send a reservation request to each of the contact centers in the network of contact centres including itself at the same time, said reservation request being for a nodal longest idle agent;
- (iii) a second input arranged to receive, for said reservation request, a nodal longest idle time and associated agent identifier from each of one or more of the contact centers;
- (v) (iv) a processor arranged to route the contact to the agent with the longest of all the received nodal longest idle times;

wherein said contact center is capable of receiving a reservation request in respect of a different contact from any contact center in said network of contact centers.

12. (previously presented) A communications network comprising a plurality of contact centers each as claimed in claim 10.

13. (previously presented) A communications network as claimed in claim 12 wherein each of said contact centers comprises a contact center server and a switch.

14. (previously presented) A communications network as claimed in claim 13 said contact center servers being linked to one another by a first part of said communications network and said switches being linked to one another by a

second part of said communications network, said first and second parts being substantially isolated from one another.

15. (previously presented) A communications network as claimed in claim 13 wherein each contact center server is connected to its associated switch using a dedicated embedded local area network connection.